

Who Is The Beast Of Revelation? (#2)

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:19-20

Revelation 17:7-11

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We continue our pursuit to understand who the Beast of Revelation is, for this is one of the chief enemies that Christ will destroy and cast into the lake of fire as King of kings and Lord of lords (in Revelation 19:19-20). This is not a question of idle curiosity or intellectual attainment, but is a question of great practical relevance to the Christian (not only of past relevance or of future relevance, but of present relevance as well). For this Beast of Revelation has power to rule on behalf of Satan as the enemy of Christ and His faithful witnesses for 1,260 years (which I submit to you means, this Beast of Revelation is presently alive). How can Christians resist Beast, if they do not know who he is or if they have not accurately identified who he is? This Beast of Revelation is a civil/political power that is associated in some way with the ancient Roman Empire (as we saw in the previous sermon). This Beast of Revelation that is associated in some way with the ancient Roman Empire has seven figurative heads (with one of those seven heads said to be wounded to death, but having that deadly wound healed according to Revelation 13:3). This is where our study of the Beast of Revelation next takes us by way of identifying this great enemy of Christ and His faithful witnesses. Our main points for the sermon this Lord's Day are the following: (1) What Are The Seven Heads Of The Beast (Revelation 17:9-10)? (2) What Is The Head Of The Beast That Was Wounded And Healed (Revelation 17:8,11)?

I. What Are The Seven Heads Of The Beast (Revelation 17:9-10)?

A. There are two different but complementary explanations given

by the interpreting angel to the Apostle John as to the meaning of the seven heads of the Beast of Revelation.

1. First, the seven heads are said by the angel to represent seven mountains or hills (Revelation 17:9). This was a familiar and famous designation among the ancients for Rome—the city built upon seven hills. In fact, there was an annual feast in Rome called “the feast of the seven hills” (cp. the historian **Seutonius** in his *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, “Domitian, Chapter 4”; cp. also Durham, who cites the poets **Virgil** and **Ovid** in his *Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation*, p. 816). This great city that is famous for its seven hills is likewise identified in Revelation 17:18 as “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth”, which refers to the worldwide empire of ancient Rome (Revelation 17:18). Thus, according to Revelation 17:9, these seven heads of the Beast are clearly associated with the political kingdom of Rome. We will consider in a future sermon this whore in greater detail, who sits upon the city of the seven hills (or Rome), but suffice it to say at this point, that this harlot (who is described earlier in Revelation 17:5 as “Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth”) is the Roman Catholic Church, whose capital is the Vatican in Rome (Revelation 17:18). This harlot church is the antithesis to the faithful bride and church of Christ. This harlot church seduces the masses (over 1 billion members throughout the world).

2. Second, the seven heads of the political kingdom of Rome are also said by the angel to represent seven “kings” (“And there are seven kings”, or better, “And they [i.e. the seven heads—GLP] are seven kings” Revelation 17:10).

a. Let’s first consider who these seven kings are not, and then we shall consider who they are.

1. First, I submit that these seven heads that are seven kings are NOT seven successive ancient world powers as some Historicists have proposed: namely, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia,

Greece, Rome, and the Gothic kingdoms. For according to this interpretation of the seven heads, Rome is only one of the heads (the sixth head, the one that “is” reigning at the time John pens this revelation).

(a) However, we have already spent time in the previous sermon demonstrating that this Beast of Revelation is the same as the fourth Beast of Daniel’s Revelation (Daniel 7), which was identified as the political empire of Rome. If the Beast in its entirety is the political empire of Rome, then it is inconsistent to identify the political empire of Rome as merely one of the heads of the Beast.

(b) Furthermore, I submit that Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece never did reign as heads over the political empire of Rome, which is the Beast of Revelation. For how could foreign kingdoms which ruled in power (some hundreds of years before Rome) be said to reign as heads over the political kingdom of Rome? They could not.

2. Second, these heads that are seven kings are NOT seven successive kings or caesars of Rome. Preterists claim that these seven kings are seven individual caesars beginning with Julius and proceeding to the seventh, Galba (with Nero being identified as the one that “is” presently reigning when John penned this prophecy in Revelation 17:10).

(a) The first reason why this interpretation of the seven heads to be the seven successive caesars from Julius to Galba fails is because it cannot provide a sound explanation of the healing of the head that is wounded to death (Revelation 13:3). The Preterist interprets the sixth head (i.e. Nero) as the head that “is” presently ruling (Revelation 17:10) and as the head that also received the deadly wound in Revelation 13:3 (which deadly wound occurred at his own hand, when he committed suicide). However, the Preterist cannot explain how this deadly wound of Nero, who is claimed to be the sixth head, was healed,

so that he came alive and reigned as the eighth head (Revelation 17:11— Nero was, Nero was not, Nero is again). For clearly Nero did not come to life and reign after Galba (who is claimed to be the seventh head). To the contrary, it was Otho who came to power after Galba, and Otho only reigned for 3 months. Otho could hardly be some literal or figurative healing of Nero’s wound.

(b) The second reason why the Preterist interpretation of the seven heads to be the seven successive caesars from Julius to Galba fails is because Preterists fail to understand which head is the great persecutor of the faithful witnesses of Christ in the Book of Revelation. Preterists claim it is the sixth head (who they claim to be Nero) that is the great persecutor. However, this is not what our text teaches. Note carefully that it is not the sixth head (which head is mortally wounded) that is the great persecutor of Christ’s faithful witnesses, but rather, it is the eighth head (i.e. the healed or revived expression of the sixth head that received the deadly wound) that comes out of the bottomless pit to war against Christ and against His faithful witnesses (Revelation 11:7; Revelation 17:8,11). Once again, if these heads are successive caesars beginning with Julius, then the eighth head or caesar would be Otho, who did not persecute the Church and only reigned for three months.

b. Having briefly considered who these seven heads (i.e. seven kings) are not, let’s now turn our attention to considering who these seven heads (i.e. seven kings) in Revelation 17:10 are.

c. The interpretation that I believe best explains the identity of the seven heads is certainly not original with me, but is rather the historic, Protestant interpretation of the seven heads of the civil Beast of Rome: namely, that the seven heads refer to a succession of forms of governments that ruled as heads over the political kingdom of Rome.

(1) First, the word “kings” (“And there are [or they

are—GLP] seven kings” in Revelation 17:10) does not always mean individual kings in prophetic Scripture. Note that in Daniel 7:17 the four political kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are called “four kings”; whereas in Daniel 7:23 these four kings are referred to as “kingdoms”. Why is that significant? It demonstrates that the word “king” does not have to refer to a single, individual king, but may actually stand for a government that includes many successive kings or rulers within it.

(2) Thus, when Revelation 17:10 says that the seven heads are seven kings, we likewise understand there to be a succession of seven forms of government that bear rule over the political kingdom of Rome. The following six stages of successive forms of government in political Rome have been identified by ancient Roman historians: Livy (who lived from 59 b.c.—circa 17 a.d.) and Tacitus (who lived from 56 a.d.—circa 118), both of whom identify the first six forms of government that reigned over political Rome as the following: (1) The rule of Kings; (2) The rule of Consuls; (3) The rule of the Council of Ten; (4) The rule of Military Tribunes; (5) The rule of Dictators; and (6) The rule of Emperors (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, p.1; Livy, *Book 1:60, Book 3:33, Book 4:7*).

(3) These were well-known and well-recognized successive stages of rule or government in ancient Rome. Thus, when the angel states in Revelation 17:10 that five of these kings (or forms of government over the political kingdom of Rome) are fallen at the time in which John pens the Book of Revelation, we should identify those five kings or stages of government that had fallen as: (1) The Kings of Rome; (2) The Consuls of Rome; (3) The Council of Ten of Rome; (4) The Military Tribunes of Rome; and (5) The Dictators of Rome.

(4) When the angel explains that one king (or form of government) is presently ruling (“five are fallen, and one is” Revelation 17:10), that would be the sixth head or form of government over the political kingdom of Rome, namely, The Emperors of Rome (which was the form of government in power at the time that John wrote the Book of

Revelation, under Emperor Domitian). The sixth head of the Roman Beast (that of The Emperors of Rome) continued from Caesar Augustus (27 b.c., who was the emperor reigning at the time of Christ's birth) until Romulus Augustus was forced to abdicate the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 476 a.d., which I submit was the point in time in which the sixth head of the Roman Beast received its deadly wound (as indicated in Revelation 13:3), and the point in time in which the Beast "was not" (Revelation 17:10).

(5) This deadly wound to the Emperors of the Western Roman Empire left the divided Western Roman Empire and particularly Rome under continuous upheaval with various barbarian rulers and the Emperor of the Eastern Empire vying for power for over two hundred and fifty years.

(6) Then the seventh head of the Roman Beast appeared in 753 a.d. when Pope Stephen II conferred upon Pepin III the title of "Patrician of the Romans" (i.e. Father or Defender of the Romans). This seventh head of Rome continued for "a short space", about 47 years (Revelation 17:10). But it was not until the sixth head of Rome (i.e. of the Emperors) is healed in the eighth head that the rule of Emperors is revived to the Western Roman Empire, which occurs in 800 a.d.

II. What Is The Head Of The Beast That Was Wounded And Healed (Revelation 17:8,11)?

A. As we now come to consider the eighth head of the Roman Beast (which is the healed or revived sixth head), I must depart from those who identify the revived eighth head of the Beast as the Papacy of Rome and for the following reasons.

1. First, as was noted earlier, the four Beasts of Daniel represent political kingdoms not ecclesiastical kingdoms (whether Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, or Rome). And since the fourth Beast of

Daniel (political Rome) is clearly one and the same with the Beast of Revelation (as was demonstrated in the previous sermon), the Beast of Revelation in its revived eighth head must also be an expression of political Rome not ecclesiastical Rome.

2. Second, the heads of the Roman Beast are likewise strictly political and civil in nature, rather than ecclesiastical. Although the Beast of Rome as a political and civil Beast supports and carries the Great Whore (i.e. ecclesiastical and religious Rome, the Roman Catholic Church) upon its back, there is clearly a distinction intended between the Beast (which is civil and political Rome) and the Great Whore (which is ecclesiastical and religious Rome) here in Revelation 17. The same distinction is also seen between the political Beast of Rome (Revelation 13:1-8) and the ecclesiastical Beast of Rome (in Revelation 13:11-17). The same distinction is also seen in Revelation 16:13 and Revelation 19:20 between the political Beast of Rome and the False Prophet (which is also ecclesiastical and religious Rome, the Roman Catholic Church). The political Beast of Rome carries out the decrees of the Great Whore (ecclesiastical Rome) in warring against the saints (as we see in Revelation 13:7), for the political Beast of Rome has the military might to do so, whereas the ecclesiastical Beast of Rome does not have such a military might and power to do so. The Roman Catholic Church throughout history has joined hands with the political Beast of Rome to war against the saints and to drink the blood of the saints. Since the first seven heads of the Roman Beast are political and civil powers (as opposed to ecclesiastical powers), I submit that likewise the revived eighth head of the Roman Beast is also a political and civil power. Thus, I submit that the revived eighth head of this political Beast is not the Papacy, but rather is a Revived Roman Empire.

3. The third reason why I do not believe the eighth head of the Roman Beast (i.e. the healed or revived sixth head) is the Papacy is because Revelation 17:11 states that the eighth head “is of the seven” or

literally “is OUT OF the seven.” However, the Papacy is not one of the seven political heads. The Papacy is rather an ecclesiastical ruler. Thus, the Papacy could not be the revival of any of the previous political heads, but rather would be a new head altogether entirely distinct from the previous seven political heads. In other words, the eighth head of the Roman Beast must be the healing or reviving of one of the seven political heads of the Kingdom of Rome, namely, the sixth head that had received the deadly wound (Revelation 13:3).

B. Thus, when was the sixth head of the Roman Emperors healed in history?

1. The sixth political head (namely, that of the Emperors ruling over the Western Roman Empire) received the deadly wound when Emperor Romulus Augustus was deposed from the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 476 a.d., and was healed and revived as the eighth head in 800 a.d. when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Roman Empire (December 25, 800) in St. Peters at Rome. Charlemagne’s official title was “most serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and pacific [peaceful—GLP] emperor, governing the Roman Empire.” There began the list of Emperors of the Revived Roman Empire, Charlemagne being the first emperor. At that time the sixth head was healed and revived in the eighth head.

a. Why in the Book of Revelation is this Beast always said to be a Beast with “seven heads” rather than a Beast with “eight heads”? Because the eighth head (Roman Emperors) is simply a revived continuation of the mortally wounded sixth head (Roman Emperors) which received a deadly wound when Romulus Augustus was deposed from power in 476 a.d. The eighth head is simply viewed as being the sixth head come alive again, rather than being an altogether different head.

b. It is this relationship of the Great Whore (the Papal

Church of Rome) riding upon the Revived Roman Empire that I submit is specifically in view in Revelation 17 and which subsequently brought about the mass slaughter of millions of faithful witnesses who stood against both the civil Beast and the ecclesiastical Beast. The Revived Roman Empire included in it most of Europe.

c. But what do we see in more recent history that would suggest that this Beast of Revelation is alive (even if it is not as pronounced as it was at the time of Charlemagne and the subsequent Holy Roman Empire in Europe in the ninth century and thereafter until 1806)?

(1) I submit that we see the Beast raise up its ugly head with great power at the time of Napoleon, who aspired to revive the Holy Roman Empire in his own person and to pose as a second Charlemagne (<http://www.heritage-history.com/www/heritage-books.php?Dir=books&author=sisters&book=leading5&story=papacy>).

(2) Then again this political Beast manifests itself with great power at the time of Hitler, who looked to the Holy Roman Empire as a precedent and an inspiration to follow (<http://www.history.com/news/european-unions-throughout-history>).

(3) The organization that has followed by way of uniting Europe at the present time is the European Union, whose original plan was to be a “United States of Europe” (<http://www.history.com/news/european-unions-throughout-history>).

(4) Although the European Union is presently an economic union in great distress, there are significant voices rising loudly and calling for a political and economic union in Europe under one President. One such major voice is former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair (who is also Roman Catholic). On October 29, 2012, Mr. Blair proposed in a speech to the Council for the Future of Europe (meeting in Berlin) that Europe needed a President of Europe so as to be both politically and

economically united (<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/tony-blair-europe-needs-elected-president-8230829.html>).

(5) Just as it was in times of economic turmoil that the German people turned to Hitler and the Third Reich (i.e. the third phase of the Holy Roman Empire), so we may be witnessing a similar spawning in Europe at the present time with the Nazi Party in Greece growing to 20 % of Greeks.

(6) And with the threat of Islam taking over Europe religiously, culturally, and politically, I would submit we will hear more voices calling for a return to the cultural and political institution of the former Holy Roman Empire of Europe and the religion that at one time bound that empire together as one: the Harlot Church of Rome.

Dear ones, the Beast of Revelation is not dead, even if it seems to not be as visible as at other times. Let us, dear ones, be sober-minded and alert. But most of all, let us always keep the eye of faith and the eye of hope upon the Lord Jesus Christ, our King of kings and Lord of lords. It is not a time to fear what man can do unto us, but a time to hope in Christ who will at some time raise up that wicked Beast of Revelation for one last display of power so that He can finally destroy him and cast him into perdition and the lake of fire (Revelation 19:19-20). Although material preparation for ourselves is always important, what is most important is our spiritual preparation and training our children to not be deceived by all such displays of political and religious union and power. We are told that the world will wonder after the Beast by way of his great power. But dear ones, we who are bound by covenant to the Lord Jesus Christ will wonder after Him, will trust only in Him, will hope in Him (who is King of kings and Lord of lords), and so we will be preserved by God's grace.

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